



**TORAH ACADEMY**  
of Bergen County

# קול תורה

**Parashat VaYigash**

**7 Tevet 5779**

**December 15, 2018**

**Vol. 28 No. 12**

## AN OUTSTANDING ENCOUNTER

*By Mr. Strassman, Guidance Department*

Since Yosef is instated as viceroy of a world power, Ya'akov has the opportunity to meet the king, Par'oh. In Parashat Vayigash, the Torah relates that *"VaYavei Yosef Et Ya'akov Aviv, VaYa'amideihu Lifnei Par'oh VaYevareich Ya'akov Et Par'oh," "Yosef brought Ya'akov, his father, and presented him to Par'oh, and Ya'akov blessed Par'oh"* (Bereishit, 47:7). While the word *"VaYa'amideihu," "and he presented him,"* comes from the root of Amad (stand), the Pasuk is explained as Ya'akov Avinu being presented before the king. This explanation is appropriate, because a certain sense of etiquette is required when greeting royalty. However, a literal translation of *"VaYa'amideihu"* would mean that Yosef physically *"stood Yaakov before Par'oh."* Indeed, one could reasonably suggest that Ya'akov Avinu required some hands-on assistance at this stage of life. In fact, the Ramban believes that Par'oh asked, *"Kama Yemei Shnei Chayecha," "How many are the days of the years of your life?"* (Bereishit, 47:8), because he was so struck by Ya'akov's advanced age. Ya'akov Avinu responded that his life was not long but exceedingly difficult, causing him to be so weak (Ramban, Bereishit 47:9). According to this understanding, *"VaYa'amideihu"* likely means simple standing, and not a presentation necessary because of ceremony. Since Ya'akov's physical stamina had so severely declined, Yosef literally had to stand him before Par'oh.

If Yaakov was indeed so frail, how was he able to leave on his own? After their brief conversation, the Torah stated, *"VaYevareich Ya'akov Et Par'oh VaYeitzei MiLifnei Par'oh," "And Ya'akov blessed Par'oh, and he left Par'oh's presence"* (Bereishit, 47:10). Unlike Ya'akov's grand entrance, in which he relied upon Yosef to stand, there is no mention of a dedicated son

supporting an elderly parent at the meeting's conclusion. By then, Ya'akov ostensibly found a way to manage and depart on his own. At first the Torah portrayed Ya'akov as a man of advanced age and limited dexterity, yet he is seemingly independent in the end. How could both be true?

The Ba'al HaTurim provides context to better comprehend this contrast in Ya'akov's behavior. He explains that the word *"VaYa'amideihu"* appears only twice in Tanach, and lacks a *"Yod"* each time. The Ba'al HaTurim proposes that the missing letter from the word *"stood"* reflects a specific deficiency in each individual. Ya'akov required assistance to stand because he lacked physical strength. Later, in Parashat Pinechas, the Torah describes God's command to inaugurate Yehoshua as Moshe's successor. During the official ceremony, it says that *"and he stood him"* (Moshe Rabbeinu stood Yehoshua) before El'azar HaKohen as part of the official ceremony. (Bamidbar, 27:22) There, the Ba'al HaTurim explains that Yehoshua needed support because he felt so embarrassed and afraid to stand before Moshe Rabbeinu as a leader. Yehoshua's lack of confidence was the main obstacle that he needed to overcome.

This comparison can help us better understand Ya'akov and Par'oh's meeting. Although Yehoshua was physically strong enough to stand independently, his lack of confidence necessitated Moshe's encouragement. On the other hand, Ya'akov Avinu's *"VaYa'amideihu"* emphasizes a physical limitation, implying that he remained strong in other areas; for instance, he was always confident. A prime example of Yaakov's assertiveness was his willingness to speak so freely to Par'oh. Furthermore, the Seforno observes that Ya'akov did not bow to Par'oh at any point during his visit. A foreign guest refusing to show respect for the king by bowing down would presumably receive a harsh punishment under ordinary circumstances, yet we find that Ya'akov Avinu is unafraid to (literally) stand up for his belief in God. While he may have lacked bodily strength, we find that Ya'akov's strength of character remained intact.

Accordingly, Ya'akov's exit plan becomes less mysterious. While Ya'akov likely still required assistance in

Kol Torah is a community-wide publication that relies on the generous donations of our friends and family in the community for its continuous existence. To sponsor an issue in memory of a loved one, in honor of a joyous occasion, or for a Refuah Sheleimah, please contact:  
[business@koltorah.org](mailto:business@koltorah.org)

taking his leave, as the meeting with Par'oh did not resolve any mobility complications, he made such an impression on Par'oh that he left their encounter on his own terms. At first glance, Par'oh saw an old man with a handicap, and all he could do was comment on Ya'akov's appearance. But Ya'akov's conduct then demonstrated the depth and strength of his character. The Torah's final words on this episode are "Vayeitzei Milifnei Par'oh," because Par'oh did not dismiss Ya'akov, rather Ya'akov excused himself.

Rashi maintains that Ya'akov offered Par'oh an interesting blessing on his way out, "*Sheya'aleh Nilus Leraglav*," "that the Nile will rise to his feet." While one cannot ignore the economic significance of irrigation in a desert environment, perhaps there is an added layer of meaning to glean from Ya'akov's words. When we look at still waters, our own reflection appears on the surface. Yet, when we engage in a meaningful interaction, when the waters are disturbed, we allow ourselves to be touched by new depths and growth is possible. May we all be Zocheh to have such outstanding encounters.

## ANGRY FIGHT OR MUSICAL NOTES?

by Benjy Koslowe ('13)

*Editors' note: The following article was originally published in Volume 20 of Kol Torah in 2010/5771. To read more Parashah and Halachah articles from previous editions of Kol Torah, please visit [koltorah.org](http://koltorah.org).*

Parashat VaYigash continues the famed word-brawl between Yehudah and Yosef. Last week's Parashah concluded with, "*Hu Yihyeh Li Eved*," "He shall be a servant unto me" (BeReishit 44:17), with Yosef saying that Binyamin will be his slave as a punishment for supposedly stealing the Gevi'a, the goblet. This week's Parashah begins, "*VaYigash Eilav Yehudah VaYomer Bi Adoni*," "Then Yehudah approached him and said, 'If you please, my lord'" (BeReishit 44:18). The Ba'al HaTurim notes that the Gematria of "VaYigash Eilav Yehuda" is equal to 396, corresponding to "Zehu Lehilachem Im Yosef." Yehudah's purpose for approaching is to fight with Yosef, despite the connotation of the text. Although Yehudah uses kind phrases such as "Bi Adoni," "please, my lord," and even calls himself "Avdecha," "your servant," Yehudah, in

actuality, intends to fight with Yosef (ad. loc. s.v. VaYigash Eilav Yehudah).

The Vilna Ga'on offers an alternative understanding of this Pasuk. Interestingly, the Vilna Ga'on notes the Ta'amei HaMikrah, the musical notes of the Torah. The first few notes on the first Pasuk of VaYigash are Kadma VeAazlah, Revi'i, Zarka, Munach, Segol. At first glance, these notes seem to be no different from those of any other Pasuk. However, the Vilna Ga'on presents an interesting perspective on these notes. He interprets the Ashkenazic names of the Ta'amei HaMikrah, and arrives at "the fourth one got up and went; and he had thrown away his eternal rest with the Am Segulah." Yehudah, the fourth son, arose to speak with Yosef. Why did Yehuda, and not the oldest son, Reuven, approach Yosef? The Vilna Ga'on answers that normally Re'uven, the Bechor, would be most responsible for Binyamin. However, Yehudah has promised Yaakov before leaving for Mitzrayim, "*Im Lo Havi'otiv Eilecha VeHitzagtiv Lefanecha VeChatati Lecha Kol HaYamin*," "If I do not bring him back to you and stand him before you, then I will have sinned to you for all time" (BeReishit 43:9). Additionally, Rashi explains that Yehudah proclaims that should he fail to return Binyamin, he will be punished "for all time," namely, in Olam HaBa (ad. loc. s.v. VeChatati Lecha Kol HaYamin). Therefore, the Vilna Ga'on explains that in this instance, Yehudah has the most responsibility, which explains why he is the one to approach Yosef and bargain for Binyamin's freedom.

Perhaps the Vilna Ga'on's interpretation can complement the Ba'al HaTurim's interpretation. The Vilna Ga'on utilizes the Ta'amei HaMikra to explain the first Pasuk in Parashat VaYigash. However, perhaps the notes can be understood in a slightly different manner. The Ta'amei Hamikrah are Kadma VeAazlah, Revi'i, Zarka, Munach, Segol. A more literal translation of these notes is, "the fourth one got up and drew a circle." That is, Yehudah approaches Yosef, and draws a circle around himself (similar to Choni HaMa'ageil). By doing so, Yehudah boldly asserts himself to Yosef and explains that he will not move until Yosef frees the innocent Binyamin. Yehudah persists to the extent that he causes Yosef to cry out finally, "*Ani Yosef Ha'Od Avi Chai*," "I am Yosef, is my father still alive?" (BeReishit 45:3).

Despite the indications of the Pasuk, Yehudah at the start of Parashat VaYigash seems to be fighting with Yosef. Although at first not making any progress, Yehudah perseveres and breaks down Yosef and forces him to reveal his true identity. However, why does the Torah record this victory so inconspicuously and make Yehuda seem to merely



in order to violate a rabbinic ordinance. If we accept that putting non-kosher food in ones mouth and spitting it out is only a rabbinic prohibition (see Kol Torah Parashat VaYeishev, Volume 28), then it would follow that one could use non-kosher toothpaste. One can violate a rabbinic prohibition on Shabbat in order to save a limb.<sup>2</sup> Even for a *Safek Sakanat Eiver*, a questionable situation where one is not sure they will lose the limb, one is still allowed to violate a rabbinic prohibition. So too, in this case, where it is not clear yet if the kosher brands are effective, and it is *Safek Sakanat Eiver*, one should be allowed to use the regular brand toothpastes.

Additionally, the principle of Achshavai does not apply to medicine. See page 22 of Rav Eider's "*Hilchot Pesach*", and Rabbi Jachter's series published in Volume 14 of Kol Torah, "*Medicines that Contain Non-Kosher Ingredients or Chametz*" (2005), for a fuller treatment of this issue.

It should be noted that the company Therabreath does in fact have a Hechsher on its mouthwash products. The mouthwash has been clinically tested, and is readily available in local pharmacies and major supermarkets. However, if one is situated in an area where Therabreath is unavailable, one may utilize the leniency of *Sakanat Eiver*.

#### *Kosher for Passover Toothpaste and Mouthwash*

Whether toothpaste and mouthwash require a Hechsher for Pesach is subject to the same discussion. While for most non-kosher food, as long as the food is *Nifsal* (degraded) to the level of *Aino Raui LeAchilat Adam*, not fit for human consumption, it is considered inedible and not Biblically prohibited, in regards to the prohibition of Chametz, it has to be *Nifsal* to the point of *Aino Raui LeAchilat Kelev*, unfit to eat even for a dog. If food becomes *Nifsal* that it is unfit even for a dog before Pesach then there is no prohibition of *Chametz*.<sup>3</sup> There are many authorities who consider dental products to be unfit even for a dog to eat, and therefore do not carry the prohibition of *Chametz*.<sup>4</sup> There would be no concern for Achshavai for the same reasons as mentioned earlier (Rav Eider Halachos o Pesach pg. 27). But according to those authorities who consider toothpaste and mouthwash as food, then dental products would require a kosher-for-Pesach Hechsher.

<sup>2</sup> *Shulchan Aruch* O.C. 328:17

<sup>3</sup> *Pesachim* 21b, 45b and *Tosafot* 21b s.v. Charko

<sup>4</sup> Rav Hershel Schachter (*Daf HaKashrut* 12:2) and Rav Moshe Feinstein (cited by Rav Shimon Eider *Halachos of Pesach*, p. 27, nt. 108)

Mouthwash containing alcohol is more of a discussion. Rav Eider (*ibid.*) quotes Rav Moshe Feinstein as maintaining a strict view regarding mouthwash containing alcohol, as some alcohol is *Chametz*, and some people might distill the alcohol out of the mouthwash to drink. However, many authorities say that mouthwash containing alcohol is not fit for consumption even by a dog, and there is therefore no problem with using it on Pesach.<sup>5</sup>

A very important difference between the prohibition of *Chametz* and other non-kosher food is that there is also a Biblical prohibition to derive benefit, *Hana'ah*, from Chametz on Pesach.<sup>6</sup> Dental products do provide *Hana'ah*. If so, then the food status of dental products is a question that has Biblical ramifications. In regards to everyday use, we explained that the discussion involves only a Rabbinical issue, as the toothpaste and mouthwash are spat out and not consumed. However, in regards to Chametz there is a Biblical prohibition of not deriving benefit, and if dental products are food, even if they are spat out, one would be in violation of a Biblical commandment if used on Pesach. Therefore, on Pesach there may be more of a reason to be strict. Furthermore, one would not be able to utilize the leniencies mentioned earlier, as those would only allow one to violate a rabbinical prohibition-- not a Biblical one. This may be why Rav Moshe Feinstein recommended using kosher for Pesach toothpaste, even though he regarded toothpaste as *Aino Raui LeAchilat Kelev* (Rav Eider *ibid.*). In addition, as noted by the first *Tosafot* to *Masechet Pesachim*, we are stricter in regards to Pesach as compared to other *Mitzvot*.

**Editors-in-Chief:** Ned Krasnopolsky, Akiva Sturm  
**Publishing Managers:** Harry Meister, Yonason Rutta  
**Publication Editors:** Avrumi Davis, Ephraim Helfgot,  
Yehoshua Kanarek  
**Business Managers:** Avraham Gellman, Eli Schloss  
**Rabbinic Advisor:** Rabbi Chaim Jachter  
Questions, comments? Contact us at:  
*Kol Torah*  
c/o Torah Academy of Bergen County  
1600 Queen Anne Road  
Teaneck, NJ 07666  
Phone: (201) 837-7696  
koltorah@koltorah.org

To subscribe to Kol Torah via email, message [webmaster@koltorah.org](mailto:webmaster@koltorah.org)

*This publication contains Torah matter and should be treated accordingly.*

<sup>5</sup> Rav Hershel Schachter (*ibid.*) also insists that mouthwash is inedible and permitted

<sup>6</sup> *Pesachim* 21